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For more information, please contact:
Greg Gatlin at 617-573-8428, ggatlin@suffolk.edu

Suffolk University Poll: In Michigan, Democrats Have Edge in Senate and Governor Races

Voters strongly disapprove of new tariffs and data center tax incentives

BOSTON— In Michigan, a state that Donald Trump won by narrow margins in 2016 and 2024, two important races are trending strongly to Democratic candidates for governor and US Senate, according to Suffolk University statewide and bellwether polls of likely voters.

In the race for Senate, Democratic nominee Abdul El-Sayed (47%) leads Republican Mike Rogers (40%), Libertarian Lydia Christensen (1%), and Natural Law Party Walter Kristy (1%), while Green Party Douglas Marsh, US Taxpayers Party Tim Long, and others combined for 1% with 8% percent of voters currently undecided. Among voters statewide who said they were not affiliated with a party, El-Sayed leads by an even greater margin of 51%-35%.

“Abdul El-Sayed is popular with unaffiliated Michigan voters,” said David Paleologos, director of the Suffolk University Political Research Center. “That, in addition to the unpopularity of recent tariffs imposed on Canada and voter unhappiness over the possibility of data centers in Michigan, has caused a massive shift to Democratic candidates among independents compared to 2024.”

The race to replace Governor Gretchen Whitmer, who is ineligible for reelection due to state term limits, appears to be even more tilted towards Democrats with Jocelyn Benson (51%) leading Republican John James (34%), followed by Green Party Douglas Campbell (2%) and Libertarian Party Anthony Hudson (1%), with US Taxpayers Party Donna Brandenburg and others combining for 1%, with 8% undecided.

The statewide poll aligns with a bellwether poll of Eaton County, which also shows El-Sayed with a lead over Rogers, although slightly more narrow at 46%-41%, with 7% undecided. In the Eaton County bellwether, Benson leads James 49%-36%, with 7% undecided.

Michigan voters reject Canadian tariffs and data center tax incentives

Nearly two-thirds (67%) of likely voters are very or somewhat concerned about the impact of new tariffs on cars, trucks, and auto parts on Michigan's jobs and auto industry. A majority (54%) believe the Canadian tariffs will hurt Michigan's auto industry by raising costs on parts and vehicles. Among unaffiliated voters across the state, 63% said it would hurt.

As the discussion of AI and data centers ramps up nationally, Michigan voters by a wide margin of 60% to 18% oppose the development of data center facilities in Michigan, and by an even wider margin of 71% to 15% oppose current federal tax breaks and federal policies put in place to encourage and speed up the development of data centers. Unaffiliated voters opposed the tax breaks and federal policies 76%-14%.

Methodology

The survey of 500 likely Michigan general election voters was conducted September 16-20, using live telephone interviews of households where respondents indicated they were very or somewhat likely to vote in the November general election. The margin of error is +/-4.4 percentage points at a 95% level of confidence. The midterm bellwether of 300 voters of Eaton County was fielded September 17-20 and has a margin of error of +/- 5.6 percentage points. Results are posted on the Suffolk University Political Research Center website. For more information, contact David Paleologos at 781-290-9310, dpaleologos@suffolk.edu.

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